

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4896

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

USIA WASHDC

HQ USSOUTHCOM SCJ-2

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 4662

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, PINS, UY

SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: GOU CONTINUES ATTACK AGAINST EL DIA

REF: MONTEVIDEO 4635 (DTG 272136Z SEP 77)

1. IN FURTHER MOVE AGAINST THE PRETIGIOUS INDEPENDENT
NEWSPAPER EL DIA, ON SEPTEMBER 27 MANAGING EDITOR,
DR. LEONARDO GUZMAN, WAS GIVEN 48 HOURS TO LEAVE URUGUAY
AND DEPARTED FOR BUENOS AIRES AT 10:30 A.M. SEPTEMBER 29.
THE EXPULSION, COMING AS THE CUMMULATIVE RESULT OF PER-
SISTENT GOU DISSATISFACTION WITH EL DIA'S EDITORIAL
POLICIES, WAS PRECIPITATED BY A TWO-WORD INSERTION IN THE
CLASSIFIED SECTION OF THE SEPTEMBER 25 EDITION VULGARLY
ABUSIVE OF THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY AS REPORTED REFTEL.
FURTHER TO THIS REPORT WE NOW UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRINT-
TYPE USED WAS NOT FROM EL DIA, THUS SUPPORTING ITS
CLAIM OF SABOTAGE. PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE GUZMAN IN-
DICATED TO PAO, WHO WENT TO AIRPORT TO BID HIM FAREWELL,
THAT HE HOPED EVENTUALLY TO GO TO THE UNITED STATES.

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2. CONTINUING ITS CAMPAIGN AGAINST EL DIA, ON SEPTEMBER 29
THE GOU ISSUED A DECREE LIFTING EL DIA'S EXONERATION FROM
DUTIES ON IMPORTS OF NEWSPRINT AND PRINTING SUPPLIES. ALL
OTHER NEWSPAPERS WILL CONTINUE TO ENJOY THIS PRIVILEGE.
THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THIS ACTION ON EL DIA WILL BE
VERY SERIOUS AND COULD BE A MORTAL BLOW. THIS LATEST MOVE
HAS BEEN OPPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT-SUPPORTING DAILY EL PAIS

WHICH PUBLISHED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT SEPTEMBER 29:
QUOTE OUR DISAGREEMENT: EL PAIS CONSIDERS IT AN UNAVOIDABLE
DUTY, IMPOSED BY BASIC JOURNALISTIC ETHICS EXPERIENCED
WITHOUT INTERRUPTION THROUGH THE LAST 59 YEARS TO EXPRESS
THAT THE MEASURE ADOPTED LAST NIGHT REGARDING (NEWSPAPER)
EL DIA WARRENTS IMPORTANT RESERVATIONS WHICH THE PRESSURE OF
TIME DOES NOT PERMIT US TO DEVELOP.

WITHOUT IN ANY WAY CONTRADICTING OURSELVES FROM OUR
POSITION TAKEN DURING THIS LAST FOUR YEARS OF SUPPORT TO
THE RESTORATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT IT
MAKES US REFLECT ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES THAT COULD COME
ABOUT FROM THE SUSPENSION ESTABLISHED BY THE DECREE IN QUESTION.

IT IS HOPED FOR THAT THIS MEASURE IS EXACTLY AS THE
TEXT STATES IT TO BE--TRANSITORY. UNQUOTE.

3. IN A CONVERSATION WITH DCM AND POLOFF EVENING SEPTEMBER
28, FOUR PROMINENT AMERICAN AND URUGUAYAN BUSINESSMEN, WHO ARE
NOTED FOR THEIR CONSERVATIVE VIEWS, CLOSE TIES WITH THE MIL-
ITARY, STRONG SUPPORT OF THE GOU AND CRITICISM OF USG HUMAN
RIGHTS POLICIES, WERE HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE GOU SUSPENSION
OF EL DIA AND EXPULSION OF GUZMAN. THEY CONSIDERED THE ACTIONS
TO BE RASH AND EXCESSIVE AND A STEP BACKWARD FROM WHATEVER
PROGRESS MIGHT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE MENDEZ-CARTER MEETING.
ONE, WHO REPRESENTS A MAJOR U.S. COMPANY HERE, WAS ALSO DISMAYED
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AT THE EXPULSION OF BRIZOLA AND ASKED RHETORICALLY: HOW CAN
MY COMPANY, AND OTHERS, WHICH ARE SYMPATHETIC TO THE GOU AND
WANT TO COUNTER ATTACKS AGAINST IT, DO ANYTHING TO HELP THIS
GOVERNMENT WHEN IT DOES SUCH STUPID THINGS?

4. COMMENT. THE ACTIONS AGAINST EL DIA ARE INDEED PUZZLING TO
BOTH FRIENDS AND FOES OF GOU. EL DIA HAS BEEN A LOYAL OPPOSITION
NEWSPAPER MANAGING TO MAINTAIN ITS CONSIDERABLE JOURNALISTIC
STATURE WHILE FOLLOWING THE VAGARIES OF AN UNWRITTEN CODE OF
PRESS CONTROL EXERCISED BY THE GOU. GUZMAN IS HIGHLY RESPECTED
AS A JOURNALIST WHO THROUGHOUT HIS CAREER HAS FOLLOWED THE
BATLLE LINE EVEN WHEN THIS PUT HIM IN DIRECT, AND POTENTIALLY
DANGEROUS, CONFRONTATION WITH THE TUPAMARO URBAN GUERRILLAS.
GUZMAN'S EXPULSION IS ALL THE MORE NOTEWORTHY BECAUSE HE IS
A URUGUAYAN CITIZEN, ALBIET NATURALIZED, AND HAS LIVED IN
URUGUAY ALL HIS LIFE.

5. THE BUSINESSMEN WHO SPOKE TO DCM AND POLOFF ATTRIBUTED
THE GOU'S ACTIONS PRIMARILY TO GENERAL ALVAREZ. THEY
NOTED THAT THIS INSULT TO THE ARMED FORCES HIT ALVAREZ
ON HIS FIRST DAY AS ACTING ARMY CINC IN GENERAL VADOR'S BASENCE
ABROAD, PUTTING HIM ON THE SPOT TO SHOW HIS STUFF. MOREOVER,

THE WORD "PUTO" (HOMOSEXUAL) RELATES TO A NASTY RUMOR ASSOCIATED WITH ALVAREZ IN THE PAST, WHICH OVER A YEAR AGO SPARKED A SERIOUS INCIDENT WHEN ALVAREZ PUBLICLY SLAPPED THE THEN SUBSECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS MICHELINI, WHO HAD REPORTEDLY MADE SUCH A REFERENCE TO ALVAREZ.

6. WHILE THE ALVAREZ FACTOR MIGHT EXPLAIN THE FIRST SHOT FROM THE HIP SUSPENDING EL DIA, WE BELIEVE THE CONTINUING ATTACK AGAINST IT RUNS MUCH DEEPER. EL DIA, AS A SYMBOL OF INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE AND SOPHISTICATION AND PERSISTENT OPPOSITION TO THE GOU, HAS UNDOUBTEDLY CAUSED DEEP FRUSTRATION AND RESENTMENT WITHIN THE MILITARY. THE INITIAL MOVE AGAINST IT APPEARS TO HAVE RELEASED THESE PENT-UP FEELINGS AND GIVEN MOMENTUM TO AN INCREASINGLY DEADLY VENDETTA WHICH MAY ULTIMATELY

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WIPE OUT THE NEWSPAPER. SHOULD THIS HAPPEN THE GOU MAY WILL BITE OFF ITS NOSE TO SPITE ITS FACE AND DELIVER A SETBACK TO ITS DECLARED DESIRE TO IMPROVE ITS INTERNATIONAL IMAGE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

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